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ḴAMSA TRIBE

ḴAMSA, a tribal confederacy in Fārs province. As Vladimir Minorsky pointed out, the leadership of a tribal confederacy is "either taken by the dominant family of one of the clans, or may be supplied by some enterprising group coming from outside" (Minorsky, p. 391). The Ḵamsa tribal confederacy is a typical case of the latter.

In the 19th century, the Qashqāʾi (Qašqāʾi) tribal confederacy was so powerful that, at times, it was able to defy the authority of the central government. The Qashqāʾi also represented a constant threat to law and order by their widespread raids in southern Fārs. Moreover, one of their chief sources of revenue was the imposition of tolls on passing caravans, especially along the Shiraz-Bušehr road, which was a vital artery of trade with the outside world. These raids and tolls (which included the *rāhdāri*, a kind of protection racket, and the *ʿolufa*, the traditional levy for fodder) were a perpetual irritant to British and Persian merchants. Thus the Persian government was under unrelenting pressure from the British consuls in Shiraz, as well as by Shirazi merchants, to provide a solution to the problem.

In 1861/62, the governor-general of Fārs, Solṭān-Morād Mirzā, tried to curb the power of the Qashqāʾi by founding a rival tribal confederacy in Fārs. Five large tribes which had been loosely associated with the Qashqāʾi tribal confederacy and which raided less important routes, were grouped together in a confederacy called Ilāt-e Ḵamsa, or Five Tribes (*ḵamsa* meaning "five" in Arabic). They were then made wards of the Qawāmi, the richest merchant family in Shiraz, whose heads were the hereditary *kalāntar*s (mayors) of

Shiraz and bore the title of Qawām-al-Molk. Therefore the creation of the new confederacy also substantially increased the strength of the Shirazi merchants. The first *ḥākem* (chief) of the Ḵamsa tribal confederacy was Mirzā ʿAli-Moḥammad Khan, a grandson of the famous statesman Ḥājji Ebrāhim Khan Eʿtemād-al-Dowla (q.v.). He was also made governor of Dārāb (Fasāʾi, I, p 320; II, pp. 47, 51, 201).

The five Ḵamsa tribes were the Bahārlu, Aynāllu, Bāṣeri, Nafar, and ʿArab tribes. The ethnic origins and the census figures for 1932 for each tribe (Kayhān, II, p. 86-87) are as follows: The Bahārlu (Turkic; some 8,000 families); the Aynāllu, or Inānlu (Turkic; some 5,000 families); The Bāṣeri (mixed Persian, Turkic, and Arabic; some 3,000 families); The Nafar (Turkic; some 3,500 families); The ʿArab tribe (see ʿARAB IV. ARAB TRIBES OF IRAN, and as the name suggests, of Arabic origin; some 13,000 families).

Unlike the Qashqāʾi *ilḵāni*s, who generally lived with their tribes and wielded absolute power, the Qawāmi were sophisticated urbanites from Shiraz, who usually contented themselves with making an annual tour of their realm for the purposes of inspection and punishment (for a description of such a tour, see Norden, pp. 155-57). Otherwise, they ruled indirectly, the allegiance of the tribal chieftains being encouraged by gifts of arms and protection against the encroachments of the provincial governors and other officials of the central government. Thus, as Fredrik Barth noted, “the confederacy seems to have been without any specific administrative apparatus” (p. 88). This system made it nearly impossible for the Qawāmi to impose any kind of discipline upon their tribal warriors, who continued their widespread depredations. Nonetheless, the acquisition of a tribal army by the Qawāmi did much to change the balance of powers in Fārs province.

From the point of view of the central government, creating the Ḵamsa tribal confederacy paid off handsomely, for, during the following century, the two rival confederacies were to be locked in a continuous and mutually debilitating struggle for supremacy in Fārs, which had the salutary effect of preventing the Qashqāʾi from unifying all the tribes in the province and establishing a stranglehold on Shiraz. But it did little to alleviate brigandage and extortion on the vital Shiraz-Bušehr road.

Because the Qawāmi family’s business interests coincided with those of Great Britain, the Ḵamsa tribal confederacy generally supported British aims in southern Persia. When the Persian Revolution of 1906-1911 started, the official

anjoman, or revolutionary committee (see ANJOMAN I.) in Shiraz, which was dominated by religious elements, turned against the Qawāmi because the latter were too closely identified with the old regime and were regarded as stooges of the British. Taking advantage of this situation, Ṣowlat-al-Dowla, the Qashqāʾi *ilḵāni,* threw in his lot with the revolutionary forces. He thus gained a valuable political foothold in the provincial capital, the traditional Qawāmi stronghold, and, several times, his tribesmen marched into the city, where the populace gave them an ovation. In March 1908, the whole province was thrown into turmoil by the assassination of Moḥammad-Reżā Khān Qawām-al-Molk, the Qawāmi leader, and by an attempt on the life of his eldest son, Ḥabib-Allāh Khan (Oberling, 1974, pp. 77-81).

During the period of the Second Majles (Parliament, November 1909 to December 1911), the turbulence in Fārs became even more intense, and the Qawāmi, with their poorly trained town militia and ragtag nomadic army, barely held their own against repeated Qashqāʾi onslaughts. In August 1910, the Qawāmi leader, Ḥabib-Allāh Khan Qawām-al-Molk, was appointed acting governor-general of Fārs. But he was not able to prevent Ṣowlat-al-Dowla from inciting a major riot in Shiraz in October of that year. The central government then decided to appoint Ḥosayn-ʿAli Khan Neẓām-al-Salṭana as governor-general of Fārs because, as a man "with large interests in South-West Persia... it was hoped [that he] would be able to keep the balance between the contending factions" (Wilson, p. 27). However, it soon became obvious that he strongly favored Ṣowlat-al-Dowla, and, as soon as he reached Shiraz in January 1911, he became embroiled in a fierce controversy with the Qawāmi.

In April 1911, Neẓām-al-Salṭana arrested Ḥabib-Allāh Khan, his brother, Naṣr-al-Dowla, and several other relatives. In May, after having been dissuaded by the central government from executing the Qawāmi leaders, Neẓām-al-Salṭana sent them into exile. But their caravan was attacked by Qashqāʾi forces near Ḵāna Zeniān, on the road to Bušehr. In the ensuing struggle, Naṣr-al-Dowla was slain. Eluding his would-be assassins, Ḥabib-Allāh Khan returned to Shiraz. There, he sought refuge in the British consulate and pleaded with the British to help him regain the upper hand in the province, and the British who, by then, were convinced that the defeat of the Qawāmi would usher in a period of unparalleled chaos in southern Persia, reluctantly obliged —in spite of the fact that, according to the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, Shiraz was in the neutral zone. In July 1911, they gave Ḥabib-Allāh Khan a substantial sum of money with which to raise and arm a new force. They also threatened

the Qashqāʾi with direct military intervention if they did not withdraw from Shiraz. Finally, they were instrumental in setting up the Swedish-officered Gendarmerie to police the Shiraz-Bušehr road and other important arteries of trade (Oberling, 1970, pp. 50-79).

The rivalry between the Qawāmi and the Qashqāʾi was further exacerbated by their choosing opposite sides in World War I. The British needed security in Fārs to protect their oilfields in Khuzistan (Ḵuzestān) and the approaches to Mesopotamia, where an invading British force was marching up the Tigris. Therefore they did everything in their power to back the Qawāmi. In fall 1915, they even succeeded in convincing the Persian government once more to appoint Ḥabib-Allāh Khan as acting governor-general of Fārs. On the other hand, the Germans wanted to sow disorder in the province so as to threaten the British oilfields and pave the way for a possible Turkish invasion of Persia. Accordingly, they sent one of their ablest agents provocateurs, Wilhelm Wassmuss, to Shiraz to entice pro-German officers of the Gendarmerie and other dissident elements to revolt against the British. In November 1915, the Germans staged a coup in Shiraz, in the course of which the British consul and eleven other British subjects were taken into captivity.

However, Wassmuss's triumph was ephemeral, for his support came mostly from the coastal tribes of Daštestān and Tangestān, which were too far from Shiraz to be of much assistance. Moreover, the insurgents had carelessly allowed Ḥabib-Allāh Khan to escape to Bušehr, where he had found a safe haven at the British consulate. In February 1916, the Qawāmi leader set out for Shiraz with a large, British-supplied private army. Although he was killed in a hunting accident on the way, Ebrāhim Khan, his son and successor as Qawam-al-Molk and *ḥākem* of the Ḵamsa tribal confederacy, recaptured Shiraz. Ebrāhim Khan was then appointed acting governor-general of the province, and a new, British-officered Persian force, the South Persia Rifles, was organized to prevent another German coup.

After that, Wassmuss directed most of his energies to forming an alliance with the Qashqāʾi and other tribes in central Fārs. Ṣowlat-al-Dowla was particularly susceptible to his appeal, for he still bore a grudge against the British for their support of the Qawāmi in 1911 and viewed the formation of the South Persia Rifles as a British scheme to solidify the power of the Qawāmi. But, by the time that he finally decided to take action in spring 1918, the war was nearly over, and British forces in southern Persia were at the peak of their strength. As a consequence, his tribal army was utterly defeated (Sykes, II, pp. 499-517).

By the end of the war, the Qawāmi had become the dominant political force in Fārs province. But, owing to their symbiotic relationship with the British, they were widely perceived as having betrayed the Persian nation, a sentiment which expressed in Abu'l-Fażl Qāsemi's highly polemical work *Tāriḵ-e siyāh yā ḥokumat-e ḵānvādahā dar Irān* (I, pp. 28-33).

At first, Ebrāhim Khan got along well with Reżā Shah Pahlavi (r. 1925-1941). When Norden visited Fārs in 1927, he was told that the Qawāmi leader "was the only overlord in Persia permitted to keep his rifles when the great order for disarmament was issued," and that he was "a close friend of Reżā's" (pp. 153-54). But, shortly thereafter, he incurred the wrath of the sovereign, for the Ḵamsa tribes, in particular the Bahārlu and ʿArab tribes, played a major role in the tribal rebellion of 1929-30 (see Oberling, 1974, pp. 160, 163, 166-67; Bayāt, pp. 52-56, 71, 85-89). As a result, Ebrāhim Khan was forced to reside permanently in Tehran, where he was a member of the Majles, and, in 1932, his ancestral domains in Shiraz were confiscated by the central government. The Ḵamsa tribes were violently repressed and their insurgent leaders put in chains. Additional hardship was inflicted upon the tribesmen when their migration routes were cut. When Oliver Garrod visited Fārs in 1945, he observed that the Bahārlu had "sadly degenerated from the effects of malaria and the diseases bred in the cumulative filth of their settlements," and that many clans of the ʿArab tribe were "in a miserable plight, having been reduced to a state of beggary and petty robbery" (p. 44).

Unlike the Qashqāʾi, who, under the enlightened leadership of Ṣowlat-al-Dowla's four sons, were thoroughly revitalized after World War II, the Ḵamsa tribes never regained their former level of prosperity. When I interviewed Ebrāhim Khan in 1957, he told me that his tribes had shrunk to a mere 10,000 to 12,000 families.

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